

FOR  
FRANCE  
AND THE  
FAITH

ALFRED  
EVGENE  
CASALIS



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FOR FRANCE AND THE FAITH







ALFRED EUGÈNE CASALIS.



FOR FRANCE  
AND THE FAITH

Letters of Alfred Eugène Casalis

Translated by  
WARREN EDWIN BRISTOL

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## INTRODUCTION

In the vast literature associated with the War, some of the pages of most priceless value are those which reveal the attitude of mind and heart of young men seeking to bring to bear their religious principles and faith upon the new and searching tests of the moral and physical battlefield of modern warfare — tests which try men's souls by fire.

These letters of the noble French soldier have served to preserve the ideals and strengthen the faith of young men in the army of France. The English edition has helped many a soldier of Britain to live his life and to fight his battle on the higher levels, and, if need be, to die a truly triumphant death. We welcome this American edition. May these simple records of self-revelation, self-discipline, and self-devotion help American young men likewise to stand fast in the faith, to quit themselves like men, and to be strong.

JOHN R. MOTT.

September 1, 1917.



## FOREWORD

*"They loved not their lives unto the death."*

— *Revelation 12: 11.*

THIS is not a biography. It is only a mosaic of fragments of letters written to his relatives and intimate friends from barrack-rooms and the front by a very young soldier who fell on the field of honor at nineteen years of age. We had gathered them and arranged them for his family.

Numerous friends having expressed a desire to see them, they are published, notwithstanding their personal and familiar character, in the hope that those who read them will be strengthened in seeing how, while serving France, this young soldier wished also to serve Jesus Christ and, wearing the horizon-blue uniform of the armies of the Republic, pursued to the end his "*Marche à l' Etoile.*"





I  
BEFORE THE CALL



# FOR FRANCE AND THE FAITH

## I

### BEFORE THE CALL

ALFRED EUGÈNE CASALIS was born on February 24th, 1896, at Morija, Basutoland, South Africa, where his parents were missionaries. From his earliest childhood he declared his firm intention of following the career of his father and grandfather. This early decision, from which he never turned aside during the course of his classical studies, led him to enter the theological seminary of Montauban. He had just commenced his second year there when the course of events turned his thoughts toward other horizons and imposed upon him other duties.

*Montauban, November 5, 1914.*

Everything is extraordinarily calm here, the people, the city, the plants, and even the ani-

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mals. Everywhere there are soldiers. It is the one fact that attracts our attention.

One feels far, very far, from the war — as if it were taking place somewhere in time and in space, and we had no part in it here.

But it must not be. One must react against this feeling. It is necessary to feel that if *they* are fighting and struggling and suffering and dying, it is for us, and that that fact creates for us certain duties; the duty to think of them, to work in order to make the *Patrie* which they are defending great and beautiful, and to pray for them if one has the faith.

And then perhaps our hour will come also. And while waiting until that hour strikes it is necessary to meditate; to open our eyes to the fact of death; to learn how to live with it at our elbows, in order that its coming may not surprise us; to prepare ourselves to receive it as a distinguished guest who will lead us toward life.

And then again, one must search to discover if he can fight — if he has a heart sufficiently free from hatred to be able to fight without animosity; if he has a heart vibrating enough with love to fight for others and not merely “to save his own skin”; if he is quite decided to be a

champion of right, of justice, and of liberty; if he loves sufficiently the justice which *will be brought about afterwards* to fight with the certainty that our victory will give one more good workman to the task of world-wide regeneration. Then, too, it is necessary to be on the watch — on the watch for the least suffering which surrounds us, in order to relieve it; on the watch for the least injustice within our reach, in order to crush it; on the watch for all justice which points upward, in order to go to its aid and make it triumph. That is our “*Veillée d’armes,*” and our watchword is “*Christ and France.*”

November 16th.

Since the beginning of the war I have been thinking with infinite gratitude of all those who went to fight in order that we might remain in security and in peace. I was meditating especially about Paul <sup>1</sup> and those who were attached to him by his vision of social justice and by the common desire to deliver humanity from war. I was thinking with admiration of all the pacifists who, by a painful effort, had succeeded in

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<sup>1</sup> His cousin, M. Paul Reuss, who fell on the field of honor Sept. 26, 1914.

harmonizing their ideal of peace with the necessity of fighting.

He himself will not see the triumph, he will have known only the sacrifice. But we who remain, who are now the "Young France," we take an oath over these freshly rounded graves to take up the work of our elders. May they rest in peace. Our life from now on is consecrated to their ideal, which has become our own. And with the aid of God, we will make their ideal victorious.

November 21st.

My room continues to be the same delightful retreat where I feel so happy. The lamp sheds a circle of light upon all that immediately surrounds me, and at a little greater distance everything rests in the penumbra, except the hearth where my fire crackles. Upon the table before me I have all my books, written and read also, for the most part, in so much enthusiasm and love. And then you are there, you and father, beneath a bouquet of chrysanthemums.

Since I left Paris I have not felt so much at peace as this evening. I was asking myself what we would become, if we were called up, we of the *classe* of 1916.

But now my mind is at rest; we are going to be called before the *conseil de revision*. All that remains is to await the hour and while waiting to prepare one's self.





II

AT THE BARRACKS



## II

### AT THE BARRACKS

IN the month of January, after having passed the Christmas holidays with his family at Paris, he presented himself before the *conseil de revision*, and, not waiting until his class (1916) would be called, enlisted as a volunteer for the duration of the war.

*Montauban, January 7, 1915.*

. . . I am a soldier of my own free will, and not because of a whim, either. What else could be done? It is all very well to be a pacifist, but under some circumstances nothing can hold one back. To begin with, when one sees what atrocities our enemies are committing, one understands that it is necessary to put a stop to them as quickly as possible, and, if one can be of any aid, he must get into the game. And then when one knows that there are those who shirk their duty, who are ambuscading, it is impossible to resist; one must be off.

And yet you know how contrary this is to my nature, to my ideals, and to my vocation. You know how it has been my desire to be of service and that I have only one ambition; to take a message of sympathy, of hope, and of love to those who suffer, as did the Master whom I love and wish to serve.

And so here I am at the barracks!

*Castelsarrasin, January 15th.*

Immediately upon my arrival at Montauban I enrolled with the 11th Infantry. On Wednesday, the 6th, at 9:00 A. M. I went to the barracks. An hour later I had become one of the most hideous looking infantrymen of France and Navarre.

In the first place, hair clipped short like that of a criminal; then I am clad in a uniform as dirty as a uniform could be. The overcoat (*capote*), ripped in many places, has a large round burn in the lower part of the back; either caused by a bursting shell, or by its former owner having sat down upon a lighted cigarette! Moreover, in said *capote* there is room enough for M—— by my side. The coat on the other hand is too small for me, and the sleeves — too short — have been darned and

resewed, one with white thread, the other with red. Then, too, the trousers also too short evidently have caught all the grease of all the mess pans of the squad.

I might add here that I have not shaved for eight days! So far as toilette is concerned all one can do is to keep clean. Apart from all this, I look sweet enough to eat!

My outfit once completed, I was notified that they would send me to Castelsarrasin where the entire 1915 class of the 11th Infantry, to which I am assigned, is receiving instruction.

Thursday morning I had my knapsack, messpan, blanket, rifle, cartridge box, etc. In short, I was ready to leave. But I did not leave then, nor Friday. Saturday I was trying to be overlooked so that I should not leave until Monday, and would be able to pass Sunday at Montauban.

Unhappily at noon the sergeant jumped on me and had me equip myself as quickly as possible with entire outfit. I went down into the barracks square and left with four other *bleus* (raw recruits).

I am quartered in a schoolroom where we are only twenty-five. It is warm here and we sleep well. For exercise they make us hum,

“*barder*”—using the favorite expression of the *adjutant*. I am getting along very well and the life is benefiting me.

Alas, here my letter *desinit in pisces*. There is roll-call at 8:15 and now it is 8:05. In order to reach the barracks I have still to cross the city, for I am writing in a café where they have loaned me a dirty table, a broken pen, and muddy ink, in a room where sixty soldiers are reading, shouting, and playing. So please excuse paper, penmanship, style, and the absence of ideas.

January 17th.

We have just been inoculated against typhoid. There were about 1,500 of us, all the *bleus* of the 11th. The injection did not hurt especially, but at eight o'clock in the evening my arm commenced to get numb. All night long I had fever with a violent headache, which gradually passed away. Now only the spot where the injection was made is at all painful, so you see all is going well.

There is nothing harder than getting to sleep in our room. Of the fifty *poilus* who are quartered here, there are about twenty peasants from Corrèze, all lodged in the same corner of

the barn. Disappointed in having to retire and being no longer able to dance "*La Bourrée*," they are whistling it with all their might. On my side there are some men from Bordeaux, who, being naturally full of fire, will not allow themselves to be outdone by the Corrèziens with whom they are great rivals. You can imagine the chances for rest! Finally about ten-thirty silence reigns. Not for long, however, for no sooner are they asleep than they begin to snore, the Bordelais as loud as the Corrèziens.

Sunday we were confined to barracks because several cases of measles had been discovered. Up to ten o'clock we did nothing, then we had *la soupe*, after which I strolled along the Moissac road and watched an uninteresting game of football. At four o'clock I entered the church to attend vespers. The organ was good and the organist very skilful. Then again mess, and I am writing to you and reading a little before going to bed.

I have been definitely assigned to the 9th squad. The Quartermaster sergeant gave me a mattress cover and a pillow slip, saying, "I have no straw, hustle around and find some." I wandered around the farms in the neighbor-

hood and finally found something with which to stuff the mattress, but not without some difficulty.

I am somewhat acquainted with my corporal, as he is from Montauban and, though a Catholic, used to attend the Christian Student Federation meetings.

I have become a member of the Corporals' Training Squad. There are 104 of us and only twenty-six corporals are needed. Naturally, in order to make the necessary selection they give us plenty of work.

How one feels the need of meditation after some time of barrack life! Here one lets go of himself to such an extent and becomes accustomed to living outside of any real communion with the Master, to praying with words and formulas only. Oh, that those who can, who have the leisure and strength might pray for those who can not!

*Montauban, February 12th.*

I have just passed fifteen days at the hospital with the measles. After six days of high fever I gradually became better and have rapidly regained my strength, not having had any complications.



Friday, the fifth, I left the hospital. I was still quite weak, but that was all. When I arrived here I was exhausted, done up completely, weighing only fifty-five kilos, with sore eyes and the beginning of bronchitis besides. And I have only eight days in which to get rid of all and be ready to regain my post.

I have seen the doctor, who ordered rest, not to go out before ten o'clock in the morning, nor after sunset. I am a very good little boy and obey his orders scrupulously. As a matter of fact, I am endeavoring to reenter the ranks as soon as possible in order to leave with the others. It seems that we shall leave for the front between the first and the twentieth of March. I say the front; in reality it is almost certain that they will take us somewhere into the army zone to complete our preparation there.

Some people have thought that after the disagreeable experiences which I underwent at the barracks, I must regret very much having enlisted! I have sent word to them that if it were to be done over I would do it again and with more enthusiasm than the first time. I only wish that I might have told them so myself.

I am happy and at peace, because I know that He is there and watches over all His own.

*Castelsarrasin*, February 13th.

Many thanks for the package. I appreciate your choice of books very much.<sup>1</sup> I have circulated them somewhat. My less fortunate pals are delighted with them; they didn't believe such good literature existed and are simply devouring it.

February 19th.

This morning, weather clear and pleasant — what luck for my first outing since leaving the hospital! We started off without knapsacks. It was delightful to swing along the road in the fresh morning air. I was in fine trim and rejoiced in the physical exercise. We marched rapidly and, in the still air, only one step could be heard. I was glad to have found my place again and not to be any longer on the shelf. We are beginning to work with a snap.

February 20th.

Today I received some news which troubles

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<sup>1</sup> Especially certain pamphlets of the "*Petite anthologie littéraire idéaliste pour les jeunes.*"

me a great deal, and before arriving at any decision I wish to speak with you about it.

A competitive examination for entrance to the reserve officers' training camp is going to be held among the volunteers and the soldiers called up of the class 1916. Those who are accepted will be assigned to a special instruction camp, where they will be trained to become reserve officers. Those who will have done their work well will leave with the grade of *aspirant*, and later (at the front) will be nominated second lieutenants, evidently an especially great advantage, for the remainder of the service.

But all that means a delay of at least four months before leaving for the front. Now I ask myself if accepting this delay would not be cowardice on my part. My comrades will be leaving for the front within a month, no doubt. And should I be remaining behind under shelter? I would be leaving only after the hardest work (the driving of the enemy out of the trenches) will probably have been accomplished! And then is it not my duty to remain with these comrades in order to help them?

This question troubles me a great deal. Pray that I may see my duty clearly and that I may have the strength to discharge it faith-

fully; either to stick humbly to my post or to work hard, should I pass the examination.

February 25th.

I wish to tell you at once where I stand. I was very much concerned about the subject of the examination for student officers of the reserve, alternating between "yes" and "no" and not seeing my way at all clearly, when Monday morning an unforeseen event drew me from my embarrassment. It happened at roll-call that morning that the lieutenant asked the company for fifty volunteers to leave for the front. It was no longer possible to hesitate. I saw my duty and immediately gave in my name.

. . . . .

These volunteers will probably leave Castel this week. They will be quartered a certain length of time at Montauban, no doubt, where their preparation will be hastened. Then they will be sent into the second line at the front, and April 1st they will be in the trenches; at least that is what they tell us. Naturally I volunteered. It will only mean a little harder training for some time and when it will be

necessary to leave, I shall certainly be in perfect trim.

Mother dear, I beg of you not to be concerned about me. I have already thought of this possibility for a long time and truly, I *could not do otherwise than offer myself*. Our Father who is good certainly can protect His child.

February 28th.

They are working us to the limit, and really, I commence to feel that we are soldiers and capable of doing something.

Friday evening, we had a night march and drill. At 7:10 we assembled in absolute silence, with full outfit. At 7:25 we departed. It was cool and we marched rapidly. At 8:15, halt; the weather was clear, the sky a very light blue with a pale gray horizon, and the leafless trees were very striking in the magnificent moonlight. We formed small groups, stacked arms, and seated ourselves, talking under our breath. The scene called to mind Detaillé's "Le Rêve." We set off again. At that moment the moon was surrounded by a marvelous halo, the most beautiful I have ever seen; it was so large that the Great Dipper would go in it almost twice over.

Soon they had us halt again and divided us into sections, each having to post sentinels and organize its guard service. I was on sentinel duty for twenty minutes on the border of a little wood. . . . Soon we returned at a fast pace and we arrived at the barracks at 11:00 P. M. Yesterday afternoon I underwent my last inoculation against typhoid. The others did not amount to much, but this one gave me a violent fever and my arm hurts me up to the shoulder, which is swollen. I hope there will be no complications.

March 1st.

I believe I have all the tough luck! Not feeling very well, I went to see the doctor this morning. He said that I had the beginning of an abscess caused by the vaccination and now here I am in the hospital. I suffer a great deal.

March 2nd.

This beastly abscess did not develop and after all was not serious. I again feel quite well and tomorrow I return to my proper place — which I wish I had never left — to shoulder again my gun and knapsack and return to drill. *Hip! Hip! Hurrah!*

March 3rd.

Would you believe it? The doctor would not accept me as a volunteer. Thursday afternoon we all had a medical examination and a third were rejected. I no longer cough at all, but it seems that a touch of bronchitis remains from my measles. Eighteen of us have been left out (*laissés en panne*).

. . . The examination was severe because these volunteers are intended for a *corps d'élite*, especially trained and prepared. You can imagine how badly I felt to have to stay behind. After all one must learn to accept the inevitable and to accept it joyously, especially because there are so many watching us.

The thought which has permitted me to remain here quietly, I was going to say almost joyfully, is that I am going to be with these young men whom I know now and who know me and who know vaguely whence I draw the little strength I have.

If you only knew how much better I now understand the human soul, especially the soul of these humble people who toil, who struggle, who suffer, who are holding on to life only by a thread — some bits of affection, a little interest, few pleasures, and above all many habits.

Ah, yes, often I regret that instinctive aloofness of earlier days.

There are such riches when one can plunge to the depth of these souls! I have learned to love them and now I am trying to speak to them. Oh, this faith which I felt at certain hours so luminous, so profound — oh, how dry and scholastic it has appeared to me, made up of subtle word distinctions, when I have had to speak to these simple people who understand only life, who never have heard people speak of idealism, nor of the spirit, nor of matter, but who merely live and suffer. There have been moments when I have asked myself if there should not be one religion for the people and another for the *intellectuels*, and, consequently, also two distinct moral laws. But no, I feel that it cannot be, I know that it cannot be, and I recall the words of the Apostle: Christ is “*the same* yesterday, and today and forever.” And was he not Himself a carpenter? And did he not say, “Blessed are the poor in spirit”?

These are some of the pangs that pierce my heart. They are true; they are real. In my faith there are many beliefs that are more or less vital; many hopes that play harmoniously



in my life only because I am at heart an idealist in the philosophic sense of the term. Without this idealism great chasms would be dug in my faith. But I know, with an unchangeable knowledge and invincible confidence, that the basis of my faith — God as Father, Christ risen and living, man subjected to the law of the duty to love — is indestructible, that it is firmly founded *upon the rock*.

So far as the rest is concerned, then, what does it matter? Little by little all will become clear and luminous. If I must renounce such and such an axiom, I will renounce it; I will cut away until I have reached *what life really is and that alone I am searching*: first, in order to live and then in order to help others to live.

We students, *intellectuels*, we allow ourselves too easily to become absorbed in our "culture." We assimilate it to the point of becoming it. And in doing so we make a great mistake. We must always remember that it is only a way of looking at things and seek to preserve carefully and religiously what can be our point of contact with other souls.

And I mean by that not only a moral, or strictly speaking a religious or Christian point of contact, but also an intellectual point of con-

tact, the angle by which we are able to penetrate their lives, to become like them, to become one of them as Jesus did.

I am writing you just as the words come to me. These facts are old and often restated, but experiencing them at every moment gives them an immense value and one which I regret not to be able to translate better.

Before the end of the month, perhaps, I shall have left for the front. In my heart I have been meditating over these things. There is also and always that peace which passes all understanding and which He has given us.

March 5th.

Now here I am with the mumps! Thursday morning my abscess had disappeared but the left side of my face commenced to swell. I made up my bundle and in the afternoon moved to the general hospital. It is a former convent where I sleep in an antique wooden four-poster. We are cared for by a good old sister who is simply charming. Friday my cheek was enormous, so large that I could see it without squinting. But I haven't had fever for an instant and am not suffering. One thing pleases me especially, I have not been weak-

ened in the least. I have a voracious appetite — but they have given me only magnesia!

Mr. Louis Lafon very kindly came to see me and brought me some chocolate, books, and writing material. I truly hope that this will not last long.

March 7th.

Am passing a sad Sunday — the saddest of all my hospital Sundays. But one thing makes it easier for me to endure — the certainty that as soon as I shall be able to leave the physician will turn me out. And then, no doubt, I shall have, as the others do, six days' leave, which I shall spend at home — that is, on condition that you wish me! Write me quickly. But it is only a hope.

*On March 11th, as a matter of fact, our dear soldier lad arrived at Paris and spent four days with us. He had quite regained his strength and gaiety. In the evening of Sunday the 14th, he left for his depot. Without knowing it, we had bidden him adieu forever on this earth.<sup>2</sup>*

Castelsarrasin, March 15th.

Leaving home was difficult, but, at the last

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<sup>2</sup> All paragraphs in italics are from the pen of the young soldier's father, M. A. Casalis.

moment, father and mother were so calm, so confident, that all became easy and one might have looked upon it as a customary parting. Especially when we had all prayed together everything became clear, and we had the absolute certainty that it was only a temporary *au revoir*, since we are awaited.

Here I am this morning again, back at the barracks. I feel marvellously well, full of enthusiasm, of hope, and of confidence. This afternoon, we did a little march of fifteen kilometers in a blistering sun and in the dust; everything went along all right. For more than a year I have not felt in such good physical condition and such good spirits.

March 16th.

. . . In short <sup>3</sup> the true virtue of the Christian soldier is steadfastness: "Hold fast that which thou hast." Unfortunately that cannot be learned in a few days' preparation: it is the lesson of a life-time and one that is never well enough understood.

In the regiment the most essential thing is

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<sup>3</sup> Extract from a letter written for *Notre Revue*, the journal of the *Lycéens chrétiens*.

not to allow oneself to become brutalized. The mind has too great a tendency to become befouled; it is necessary to keep incessantly on the alert, and to that end one must prepare in advance, before leaving, a series of subjects to study, which will furnish food for meditation during the hours of marching or inactivity.

Some of the most painful hours of regiment life are spent on the march. Then it is that the coarseness of the men comes to light most forcibly and in the form of the vilest songs. They are so disgusting one guards silence. But a moment comes when even the most calloused have had enough—that is the opportunity which must be seized to strike up a clean, attractive, healthful song, and we do not lack that kind. Since in the barracks one is rubbing shoulders with the least agreeable things of life, characters are soon shown up as they really are. One must immediately take a positive attitude to show what he is: a Christian. Then to hold on. If one has fallen in with a bad crowd, he can clear himself by keeping apart from the others, but never forget the command of our Master, “Love one another,” translated more especially in this case by the motto of the

Boy Scouts, "Render service at all times." By this attitude you make others respect you and it is the surest way to their hearts.

March 17th.

We do not remain here much longer. The hour of departure is very near. In a fortnight we probably shall be at the front.

I shall leave calmly and with confidence. I shall fight with a good conscience and without fear, I hope; without hate, surely; because I believe our cause is just, because France victorious will have a mission to fulfil, a mission of civilizing and educating mankind for a greater solidarity. I believe that because I have, for my part, accepted such a vocation and because I know many who have made it theirs.

I feel filled with unbounded hope which shows me beyond death the beginning of a renewed and magnificent life.

March 21st.

I know a little soldier who would have liked to write you for Sunday, but who did not have the time and regrets it very much.

Just think, yesterday morning we were awakened at 5:20 and the sergeant shouted to us

"In full uniform." As I was *en corvée*, I slipped into red trousers, coat, and *képi* and hurried to the kitchen. Returning, I put on my shoes and gaiters and made my bed.

The sergeant enters: "All in undress." I had to jump, change at fourth speed, and on the run equip myself with knapsack, gun, etc.

Scarcely ready when the sergeant returns: "Throw off your outfit and carry your bedding down into the courtyard." We threw off our outfit, carried our bedding down, then climbed the staircase four steps at a time, equipped ourselves, reassembled, and here we are off for Cordes.

In the freshness of the morning under the clear sky we marched fast. After the climb came a feed, then target practice. We came back rapidly in the heat of the day; the knapsack was heavy and the feet sore, but we were glad to get back.

When, lo and behold, from the door of the barracks we saw all our bedding out in the sun, forgotten. After going up to throw off our things, we went down into the court after the mattresses, etc. As some are ill, there is other bedding to carry up besides one's own. That done, without having had time even to change

our shoes we ran to get tea and later *la soupe*, for it was six o'clock.

When at last we had been able to eat and to scrape the mud off, we were so dead tired we could only crawl to the canteen for a hot drink and then turn in. Thus it was that I didn't write you your Sunday letter.

These days I am thinking about an article which I owe to C. for *Notre Revue*, the magazine of the *Lycéens chrétiens*. I believe that I shall write about death, for I am often thinking about it. I am thinking of all these young souls, of these new lives which the war has re-forged and which, intent on sacrifice, have become beautiful and great. I think that I shall take my inspiration from these words of Jesus, "Father, I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." But I do not know if I shall be able to write the article. If the ideas and words don't come as I wish, I shall write nothing.

Do not conclude from this that I believe myself about to die. No, I have more faith than ever in life. I realize more than in the past that it is necessary *to live*, and I *wish* to live. But nevertheless I feel ready, and death, if it should



come, will not take me by surprise. However, I should have liked one thing — to attend one more Communion service. At the same time I hope that we shall be far away at the front, by Easter.

You have no idea of the peace in which I live. All those I love are near me, very near —.

We are *all* now *en service commandé* and our service is sacred. Perhaps we shall be called to remain alone; those who will have gone before will still be with us and the memory of their effort will live. Besides they will be living in the light which our eyes do not yet behold, very near to us. And we shall be forever united in the closest of bonds when we are one in Him, we in Him and He in us.

March 25th.

We are still working very hard. Nearly every morning we have an hour's fencing *à la bayonnette*, and an hour's gun drill. In the afternoon they divide us into two squads, one attacking the other. We advance as skirmishers and at every fresh bound each digs a cover for himself. This exercise terminates with a bayonet charge, all shouting like demons.

Yesterday we had target practice at Cordes.

*Réveil* at five o'clock; at 5:35 assembly in the courtyard, with full campaign equipment; at six, off. The weather was fine and cool, and marching was not difficult. It certainly is springtime. Along the hedges the hawthorn is in bloom, and here and there hang long clusters of clematis. Everywhere violets, daisies, and buttercups. The men were in good spirits and hummed tunes all along the way.

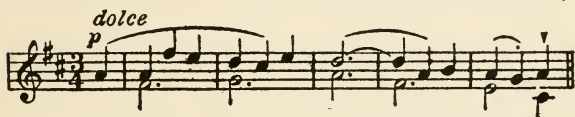
We reached the practice ground about 8:30. From nine o'clock until noon, rifle shots followed one another without interruption, and upon a mound at 250 meters the indifferent silhouettes appeared and disappeared every ten seconds.

One has to fire quite fast. I almost did as one guy who said, "*Mon lieutenant*, I see double, and, unfortunately, I always fire at the second image!"

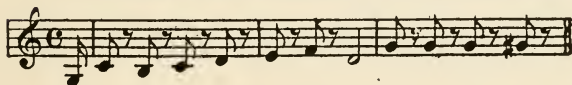
About noon bugle call and we ate, scattered about at the foot of trees, watching the Garonne flow past, clear and majestic. At one o'clock, a whistle, shoulder knapsacks, and *en route*. It was torrid hot, the climb stiff, and the knapsack heavy. The first few minutes were trying, then one got into the stride, and the rest of the march went with a swing.

When I do not know what to do, on the march for example, or at exercise, I sing *intérieurement*; I listen to the music which is slumbering within me. At this moment it is especially Beethoven who is speaking to me. One or two things, these days, have done me a particular amount of good.

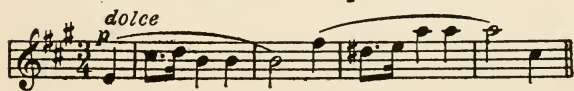
*Le Menuetto de la sonate VII, de Beethoven,*



*l'Andante de la sonate X, de Beethoven,*



*et le 7<sup>e</sup> Prélude de Chopin:*



You will excuse me if I do not transcribe them in the right key; it is only to give you a general idea of what I am writing about.

March 25th.

The Master's call is always ringing in my

ears, or rather in my heart, and what am I doing by way of responding to it?

I hear the question of Pilate "Art thou the King?" and Jesus replying, "Thou sayest it." And here the Prince of Peace, the Christ-King, is forsaken; His words, His commands, His teachings are contradicted by the life of every day. Oh, my France, what hast thou done with thy King? And all Christendom and the Church, what have you done with your Saviour? He was King, King by right, King by birth, King by the will of God; and His own have forsaken Him; He is left alone.

But it can not be thus. He *shall be* King. The Student Volunteers have promised it. Francis Monod, Robert Prunier, and others, many others, have died thinking of the glorious reign which ought to come, and which is coming. Their death is a stride in the coming of this reign, as their life had been.

And then the new France must arise for this: "To make Christ King." And to those who remain is the task of preparing new laborers for the harvest which is ripening.

We take the oath, Lord, that we will work that thy Kingdom come; we will give our life for this ideal.

March 28th.

They have been teaching us how to construct individual entrenchments. We attack *en tirailleurs*, elbow to elbow. At the command "halt," we lie down and as quickly as possible take off our sacks and place them in front of us as a protection. The even numbers commence firing, and the odds, while remaining flat and sheltered as much as possible, must dig a trough in which they can stretch out full length, a trench deeper at the head than at the foot. All the earth removed is piled up in front in such a manner as to form a mask. As soon as the pile is large enough to conceal a man at full length, the rôles are reversed; the even numbers dig and the odds fire. When everybody is under cover, we again change tools, join together, and deepen the individual trenches so as to transform them into trenches for riflemen lying down. The essential thing is to work fast—not easy when one is stretched out full length.

To give more "pep" to the exercise a line of enemies is placed in a trench already existing in front of the workers, and blank cartridges are served out to them. When they notice a man showing himself a little too much they fire

at him and the man is declared dead. However, that doesn't prevent him from continuing his digging!

I think that I am ready to leave, I mean morally speaking. I have tried with all my power to prepare for it. And I have accustomed myself to face the idea of death; it gives me no fear. If I must fall up there, I am ready. I shall die without regret, because I know that others will know how to do better than I the work to which I am consecrated, because I have the assurance that I have found the way, and that the Master will recognize me as one of His own. I am at peace, for I know that the Father will take care of those whom I love and that He will guard me. More and more it seems to me that I can live only to work for this: "Thy Kingdom come."

April 1st.

We feel that the hour of departure is approaching. We must be at Montauban April 12th, at the latest. I commence to have had enough of this hole of a Castel. I scarcely ever go out now. This evening I went to hear the "Stabat" sung.

My Corporal having left, I replace him, and

must make the roll call. Therefore it is needless to turn in before 8:15. I am going to profit from these few minutes to read and meditate over my New Testament.

I am thinking especially of these words, "With desire I have desired to eat this pass-over with you" (Luke 22:15).<sup>4</sup> This passage struck me particularly last evening, "Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father" (John 13:1), and that promise he made to his disciples is a source of strength to me, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). May we learn obedience by the things which we suffer (cf. Heb. 5:8) and "know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death," if by any means we may attain unto the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10, 11).

April 5th.

Yesterday I had twenty-four hours' leave which I spent at Montauban. Today, Easter Monday, we are free from noon on. I went

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<sup>4</sup> He had hoped to pass Easter at Montauban and to take communion there. This pleasure was accorded him.

out with five or six comrades; we took along books, paper, and fishpoles. Then we went and sat down on the bank of the canal, dropped our lines into the water and basked in the sunlight, chatting like kids. The canal, in spring, is the only agreeable sight at Castel. The very clear sky of a pale blue, the rippling water, the trees on all sides which were becoming green, the sun, the red trousers and the peaceful barges — all that made a very picturesque and restful scene.

When I wrote you last week that I was a little tired, I meant by that simply as every evening. After having done an hour of bayonet fencing and an hour of gun drill in the morning, marched ten or twelve kilometers in the afternoon, practiced skirmish attacks and dug shelter trenches, only one idea comes to us, to turn in as soon as possible. I am marvelously well and at Montauban I was complimented on my ruddy complexion and even on being fat!

Here is the story of my leave. Last Thursday, we went to Cordes for rifle practice. When it came time to return, the lieutenant said to us, "Let us try to catch up with the 4th Company, which left here twenty minutes



ago." Accordingly we stretched out more and more, which was quite easy as our knapsacks were empty or nearly so. Arrived at the top of the slope, we saw the 4th Company a kilometer and a half ahead, so we lengthened our stride. But after a while they saw that we were giving them the chase and struck up a quicker pace. Seeing that, our lieutenant each time that a turn concealed us from their view put us at double quick. As soon as this was discovered, the 4th did likewise. Thus we gave them a frantic chase until within a kilometer of Castel, where we stopped to await the stragglers; we were then only fifty meters from the 4th! And the ten kilometers had been covered in one hour and a quarter!

The lieutenant was delighted. Moreover at roll call in the evening he had it announced that those who wanted a leave had only to see him.

Then and there I put in a request, and Saturday morning it was signed. I left Castel at 3 o'clock, took tea with the L's, and dined with Madame C. Sunday I lunched at Madame L's, who had invited me and had prepared a monstrous meal fit for Pantagruel. Notwithstanding my very remarkable appetite, I could not eat enough to satisfy her.

In the afternoon I heard a fine sermon by Mr. Louis Lafon on the text, "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes," followed by a Communion service which was very beautiful and helpful after the loneliness of Castel. You can imagine how I enjoyed my Easter Day!

Just think! The other day on the barrack stairs I heard a raw peasant from Limousin whistling *à tue-tête* the Minuet of the 7th Sonata of Beethoven! He had picked it up from hearing me hum it on the march.

Tomorrow we take up the usual work. As for our departure we know nothing.

*Montauban, April 7th.*

Here I am again at Montauban for a few hours, and this time it is for the departure. I leave with a detachment of 120 men to go to reenforce the —th at the Hurlus front.

Monday evening, at 5 o'clock roll call, sixteen volunteers were called for from the company. As I had been excused from roll call I was not there, but I was informed in the evening that thirty volunteers — or *involontaires* — had been taken, sixteen to leave at once, the others in case some of the first lot were re-

jected by the doctors. Tuesday morning at 6:15, drill; the medical examination had to be passed at 7 o'clock. When the lieutenant arrived a comrade and I told him of our desire to go, and he authorized us to be examined. We went and found that it was a long examination. The doctor said to me, "You can go, no danger of your being rejected." It was 8:05 and I was in undress. I rushed into the dormitory, changed, made up my sack, and gave to the quarter-master everything I didn't need. At half past eight, downstairs. At nine, we took the train. On arriving here, I found the Rev. Mr. P. Galley and lunched with him at the mess of the non-commissioned officers, he being an adjutant. Then we went to his room where I found Robert Dieterlen, the missionary, who is corporal in the —th *Chasseurs*.<sup>5</sup>

This afternoon they gave us a new outfit, fancy gray coat, *capote* of mist blue, small light blue *képi*, and excellent shoes. Besides there are rest shoes, a large sleeping sack of waterproof canvas, canteen, knapsack, shelter tent and pegs, tools, and a camp kettle. When

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<sup>5</sup> Missing since the great offensive of September 25, 1915.

all will be included the knapsack will weigh about twenty-four kilos! At nine o'clock this morning we shall be passed in review, and probably leave in the course of the afternoon.

I leave contented, confident, at peace. I thank you, father, and you my darling mother, for all the love and tenderness you have given us, for all the confidence in life and in our Lord, and for all the hope you have inspired in me. Thanks also, that on leaving, we are assured that you will not grieve too much, because you know how we are protected. I embrace you with all the love in my heart.

April 7th.

Now we are off! I leave joyful at the thought that at last I am going to be able to do something.

I am not afraid to die. I say this in all sincerity; I have made the sacrifice of my life. I can do it without any fear.

In the first place I know that to die is to begin to live; not to live in an eternal rapture of contemplation, but to live truly. I believe that the dead live close to the living, invisible but present, and perhaps it is they whom God sends us in response to our prayers, in order that

their spirit which is His spirit may guide us and inspire us.

And then I hope to have left behind me in a few hearts some seeds which will spring up in the Lord's good time. And all that I have lived for, all that I wished to be and to do — all that, I feel, will live again and not perish.

Do not believe because you and others remain behind without taking part in the struggle that you are useless — quite the contrary. There is something you can do, pray. Pray for those who have left for the front, and who need to be upheld. Pray for those who suffer. Pray the Master to send laborers into His harvest. Prayer itself is a struggle. It must be a combat where we conquer our desires and impulses in order that we may say to God, "Thou, thou knowest better than we do what is necessary for us; enable us to place all in thy hands, knowing that thy will, whatever it may be, is a will of infinite love."

I speak to you about death, because I am thinking about it, because my entire effort is spent in preparing for it, since it may come. Whatever happens, remember, "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." But I have faith in life, faith in God. "Fear nothing,

only believe." Trust Him confidently, and pray also on behalf of those who are fighting and who can not, themselves, find the time to pray aright.

III

AT THE FRONT





### III

#### AT THE FRONT

*Cahors Station, April 7th, 8 P. M.*

WE left Montauban at 4:21 P. M. We are traveling in a cattle car, thirty-two of us. Beautiful weather. Thus far good trip. Unfortunately Cahors lunch counter closed, impossible to get anything hot.

*Châteauroux, April 8th, 2 P. M.*

Rained all night. The car roof leaked and we were pretty well soaked. Had to change cars and now we are royally settled in first-class compartments. Great welcome everywhere; cars bedecked with flowers! No dragoons at the station, so could not find out if the fourth squadron is still at Baccarat.<sup>1</sup> All goes well.

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<sup>1</sup> Squadron in which his oldest brother was serving as *brigadier*.

*Troyes*, April 9th, 8 A. M.

Delightful night in our first-class carriage, slept like a king. Everything continues to go along first rate. Able to have a good wash and shave this morning. Going on in the direction of Neufchâteau. All's well.

*Bar-le-Duc*, April 10th, 4 P. M.

We arrived here last night at 10:15. We were all snoozing in the train, when some one cried, "*Le——th en bas.*" Immediately we were getting ready, digging out knapsacks and guns. Many men had paid no further thought to their knapsacks or guns since leaving Montauban; therefore for a few minutes there was an admirable little "*pagaille.*"

Finally we left the station and crossed the city. We are quartered in an old factory where we have a little straw, but it is cold as a barn. Having no blankets we were freezing; slept well until three o'clock just the same. Since then I have dressed and brushed up. We are going to start in a minute, by railway train as before, for the front which is only some thirty-five kilometers away. Naturally we are going in an unknown direction.

*Des Armées de la République,*  
Sunday, April 11th.

Our trip ended yesterday afternoon, and now we have joined our regiment. At five o'clock we left our Bar-le-Duc factory, crossed the city, and took the train. Slowly, at an average rate of fifteen kilometers an hour perhaps, we passed over a series of hills in the direction of Verdun. It rained, it snowed, it froze; but soon we no longer thought anything about it. Right and left we were leaving behind us bombarded and burned villages and fields ploughed up by shells. Everywhere there were shell sockets, empty "*boîtes de singe*" small lines of trenches and graves; graves already almost levelled by the rain and wind, bearing a modest cross of wood, most often nameless, and here and there adorned with a *képi*, an empty socket or a bayonet. How sad these tombs are, half-hidden in the fields which are becoming green!

At eleven o'clock we get off at Souilly-sur-Meuse at about twenty or twenty-five kilometers from Verdun, whose cannon can be heard roaring. It is raining. The roads are covered with a very soft chalky mud and everybody is more or less plastered with it.

We fall into line, haversacks on our backs, in a field, and we start off for the cantonment. The rain has stopped. Between the clouds the sun risks itself a little. For three hours and a half we paddle in the mud and finally arrive at Heippes-sur-Meuse, where we still are.

Heippes is a very small village encircled by hills. Here one sees soldiers almost exclusively. All of the —th Army Corps is in this region, *au repos* for the first time since the beginning. What is going to be done with it? No one knows.

The soldiers are horribly dirty; uniforms torn, burned, and covered with mud. That is readily understood, when one sees the life they lived in the trenches, sleeping on damp soil, crawling in the mire, and spattered with mud by the bursting shells.

My company is quartered in a large barn. There are cows below us. Above and to the right of the door are the first and the second sections, sleeping on straw and having for light only that which enters by the door or by the chinks between the tiles. A little farther up and to the left are the other two sections. We are packed one against the other, side by side. Plenty of water, and it is very good;

food excellent and quite abundant. On the whole we are better off than at the barracks and I have slept like a king; but — there are some many-footed inhabitants of all colors, forms, and thicknesses.

Naturally we receive many tips, but especially this one, "Lighten your sack as much as possible." Accordingly we throw overboard ("balancer") the extra shoes, tent pegs, kettle, six out of ten biscuits, two of the three cans of preserves, and, as soon as it commences to trouble us, the sleeping-bag, for it seems the tent canvas is a good substitute. Just imagine, thus lightened the knapsack still weighs from fifteen to twenty kilos and in addition each one of us carries 96 cartridges though we should have 250.

Above Heippes there is a hill which the Germans were occupying and which was captured between the 6th and 14th of September by seven regiments, nearly all from the reserve. They fought bitterly. And on the summit is any number of graves. They say there are three thousand men up there, French as well as Germans.

Over the principal mound there is a cement block bearing a tall cross of carved wood, with

inscriptions. On one of the graves there is also a large cross of white wood and a wreath with these words: "*En souvenir de Roger Couve.*"

There has been a great deal of fighting in this vicinity, on all sides, destroyed and burned villages. It is frightfully sad.

But I will go. I have no fear. I am at peace. I feel ready. It is of infinite value to me to know that the prayers and thoughts of those who love me follow me everywhere. Besides have we not said:

"Dans la joie et la souffrance,  
Je veux te suivre en tout lieu,  
Toute ma vie à l'avance,  
Je te l'apporte, ô mon Dieu!"

Very often I think of this France which is going to come, which will be born of the freedom-bearing war. It is necessary that she understand her duty to be human. One must know what he is and what he is doing that all may live in the conscious presence of *le Devoir*.<sup>2</sup> It is not a case of having a duty be-

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<sup>2</sup> "The English sense of the word 'duty'—  
'Stern Daughter of the Voice of God'  
—hardly corresponds to that of the beautiful French

cause one lives, but of living because one has a duty; and in so much as one has one and knows it, to live for it.

Enclosed are two or three violets from here: spring is everywhere the same sweet, fresh messenger of hope.

*Courcelles-sur-Aire*, April 13th.

Last Monday we left Heippes in order to go farther south to Courcelles-sur-Aire, where we have remained ever since.

The place is truly charming, in the midst of its circle of hills and bordered by small groves of ash trees and firs. The weather is always delightfully clear, cool, and sunny. Below the village runs a swift stream of very cold water, the Aire. Yesterday afternoon I spent two or three hours upon its bank writing, reading, and doing my washing. Besides I gath-

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word *devoir*, which recurs so often in these letters and which signified in chivalry the devout and willing, as well as faithful fulfilment of knightly obligation. *Devoir* was the watchword of this young hero's life, and in the letters which follow, it stands out for all that free and joyful service which it was his heart's desire to render, not only to the land that claimed his earthly allegiance, but to the Kingdom of God."—G. W. Mackintosh.

ered a quantity of wild chicory for salad. If it is still as fine this afternoon and we are free, I shall return there to fish.

Five or six of us have clubbed together for mess, a sort of cooperative society. Each brings his contribution. Thus yesterday we had, besides the regulation soup and meat, a wild chicory salad with two hard boiled eggs, some fried minnows, wine, and milk — truly a feast for a king.

I have, as they say, discovered the *flon* ("struck ore"). My regiment, being from the South, drinks a great deal of wine, and from the moment of its arrival at the encampment all the men make a rush on the wine merchants, the grocers, and even the inhabitants: result, impossible to be served. So while the others are scrambling for wine, I hurry off to look for some milk, and, if possible, one or two eggs. So much the better, because the milk is very good around here and I prefer it to wine.

Notwithstanding my fears, last night was as restful as the preceding ones. The straw was plainly damp; but I slept upon my doubled up tent canvas, rolled up in my good blanket, with my head upon the knapsack, and I was as



happy as a prince. We are, however, so closely packed against each other that it is necessary to sleep on the side, and I had all the difficulty in the world turning over during the night.

In the morning, *jus exquis* (excellent coffee). It had been freezing, the sky was fresh and blue, and without thinking I commenced to whistle Grieg's "Matin" with all my might.

Seven o'clock, *corvée* (fatigue duty) after wood. There were twenty of us. We did practically nothing for two hours except to warm ourselves in the sun and breathe the pure air. At nine o'clock we came back slowly with our wood. It was while on *corvée* duty that I gathered the enclosed violets.

The report has just been read; that is to say, the lieutenant has announced that there is nothing to report! Drill this afternoon.

April 14th.

We are still at Courcelles, and they are not yet talking of sending us away; but it is altogether plain that we shall not remain here long. The cannon commenced their fire this morning. We are doing next to nothing, eating

well, and sleeping the same. If this régime continues it will not be long before we are big and fat.

Yesterday at one P. M. started off without knapsack, canteen, or *musette*. We climbed slowly the hills opposite. Then we were sent to the edge of the trenches which are up there, made to examine them, and finally went through some combination drills, returning by four o'clock.

Here, also, there was much fighting during the battle of the Marne. Here our right wing drove back the German left. In every direction there are shell craters, shell sockets, splinters from bursted shells, fuse caps, loaders, crushed canteens, and torn knapsacks. And then the graves —! Here and there one sees a cross or simply some trenches, where the bodies have been thrown, and which later have been filled in.

But life is taking on more and more its normal course. The engineering corps has repaired the bridges and the roads; little by little the inhabitants have begun rebuilding; bombarded dwellings are being repaired temporarily, the walls reenforced and covered with a makeshift roof.

Many of the fields are being ploughed, seeded, and irrigated. Grain is coming up. Yesterday evening on returning from drill we found ourselves face to face with an old, old peasant, very wrinkled, but who was straightening himself up proudly to sow the field which his children could no longer cultivate. Though older, he resembled "The Sower" of Burnand. It was truly an impressive sight.

This afternoon, again, we went out on drill. We did barely more than ten kilometers, in a slight sprinkle of rain. For my part, I found the tramp delightful; the country is beautiful, there are interesting things to see, and it is an excellent exercise.

April 15th.

Throughout the day, an important movement of troops has taken place in our neighborhood. From 6:30 A. M. regiments passed, headed by their bands. Then passed the motor trucks, the ambulances, the artillery, the cavalry, and still more infantry. During the afternoon, from time to time, troops were still going by. Moreover, we are asking ourselves if we shall not be leaving in our turn this night or tomorrow.

As a matter of fact, this afternoon they came after us at the moment we were going to start drill. We were taken back to cantonment rapidly, and there took place the *fête* of the battalion, which was not to have been celebrated until Saturday next!

There were foot races (100 meters flat) and wrestling. I ran, but having fallen, came in only second in the semi-final, and won a pencil for my trouble!

This morning I took a tramp on the hills. It was truly delightful. The weather was fine and warm. All the valley was bathed in a blue haze, almost transparent, and the motionless poplars seemed to be tall pages sleeping beside the silvery road which wound through this garden of the "Belle au Bois Dormant." One heard only the larks, and the formidable bass of the cannon which have not ceased booming all day long.

At one o'clock off for drill. It was very hot. At first we skirted the side of the hill, then we passed over the summit, and into a grove where we halted. It was in that spot (there had been hot fighting there) that I gathered the periwinkles and anemones enclosed.

The periwinkles made me think of Moraja;<sup>3</sup> you recall the alley which led from the terrace of the Mabilles' house to the little gate under the eucalyptus!

Poor mission fields! I often think of Francis Monod. Could you send me the *Journal des Missions*? Could father also write a word to our chaplain in order to tell him where I am?

Could R. send me the words of Stevenson's "Requiem"? I like it so much, especially the music, that I should like to try to translate it.

Do not be astonished that my style and ideas are so flowery; while writing I am supporting the paper on my canteen. It is true that it has contained only milk for the last three days!

April 16th.

We thought that we would start last night, but for a change we are still here. Beautiful day as usual, and ideal temperature. The cannon of Verdun are no longer heard, but to be sure the wind is now always from the west.

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<sup>3</sup>The mission station in Basutoland where he was born and lived several years.

Therefore everything is perfectly calm except for the autobuses and motor trucks which pass almost without interruption. Moreover, there are aides-de-camp going and coming all the time. Finally, they have notified us that we are in *cantonnement d'alerte* until further notice.

This afternoon, bayonet drill. As two corporals were missing R. and I (the two "*bleus*" of the squad) had to replace them as monitors. You can see us making a bunch of old veterans work, none of whom were under forty years of age!

Finally, for the second part of the program, there were some games. We played *barres* and *petits paquets*. These soldiers (many of them territorials) formed an astonishing spectacle running after each other and enjoying themselves like little kids!

Besides, the funniest part of it was that when we had had enough of it and wished to stop, the non-commissioned officer shouted at us, "If you do not play, I will run you all in." And what's more he would have done it.

We sleep all night and sometimes during the daytime. We eat at all hours, whenever anything comes our way. When it is our turn,

we go on *corvée* duty. This morning, for instance, I commenced by sweeping the road in front of the post and cleaning the borders of the said post, after which I picked up the old bones, tin cans, bread crusts, and papers which were wandering around the camp. We are passed in reviews, we drill, etc.

Sunday, April 18th.

I would have liked to be able to attend church service today, for there must be one in some part of the sector. But I was unable to find out where, and it would have done me no good anyway, for we have been told to be ready to move any hour of the day or night without previous warning. Consequently the men must not go more than 500 meters from camp.

I assure you that the long rest begins to wear on me, and that I would much rather be doing something. All the more since the cannon of Verdun are again heard, and it is horrible to think that while one is here doing nothing there are those who, very near us, are being killed. More and more in the face of those who have struggled and who are dead, in the presence of the immense effort which

has been made, I think of the France which is to come, of the divine France which must be. I could not fight if I did not hope in the birth of that France for whom it will have been worth while to kill and to be killed.

I try to profit from these days of rest in order to prepare myself still more. I have time to read and meditate. In the morning I try to slip away to the hillside to pray, and in the evening I pass a moment in church where a few soldiers come.

If you knew how I regret not having known how to live and serve my Sunday school boys, my Boy Scouts, and my friends! But regretting serves no purpose. My heart is full to overflowing of things I should like to say to those who suffer, who weep, who wait, and hope.

For me the military life has simplified everything. Things have taken on their true values and full significance. Some difficulties which seemed insurmountable have disappeared. Intellectual sacrifices which I thought I could never accept have taken place almost of themselves, without a pang. And there results a new vitality, a desire for intense action. And



then, there is always peace. However, I fear this peace both for myself and for those I love, because too often it is only human. By this I mean that it is weakness and resignation, in place of being the full consciousness of a positive duty and a real force. And I often pray as follows for myself and for those I love:

Lord, our God, our loving Father, stir up our souls in order that they may not be like stagnant waters. Do not permit us to sleep in a cowardly security, in a lifeless calm, believing that it is peace. On the other hand, give our hearts the power to suffer intensely in communion with all grief, to revolt against all injustice, to be thrilled by the appeal of every noble and holy cause. Lord, our Christ, thy Son, suffered. He wept over the death of His friend. He wept over thy rebellious people. He wept over His work which threatened to end with His earthly life. But He lived so intensely and humanly that He was able to say to us men, "I am the life." Lord, make our hearts alive. Then will thy peace descend upon them, not as the snow which benumbs and freezes, but as the warmth of the

sun which revives the sap in the very veins of the earth. O Lord, may thy Peace be with us; thy peace and not the peace of men. Amen.

April 20th.

Upon the sparse grass behind the barn, in the shade (?) of some plum trees which as yet are only in bud, there are some thirty men stretched out face downward, or, with their *képi* over their eyes, flat on their backs. Nearly all are sleeping; I alone am writing. If it were not for a delightfully refreshing breeze from the northwest, nothing would remain in the skull but a "thick and blood-streaked paste" (*bouille épaisse et sanguinolente*), as my neighbor Corporal A., says.

Those who are not here are snoring their loudest in the stable, except for some philosophers who are fishing from the bank of the little stream.

The bank of this brook is a utopian spot. Unhappily it is 200 meters from the cantonment and if you go to sleep there and miss the drill hour, no one will go to wake you up. Result: eight days in the guard house.

By the way, the prison is a most original affair. Normally the prisoners are kept in

the lock-up, some room of the cantonment. But as they are very numerous at this time —“*rapport au vin*”—the prisoners are enclosed (?) in a square traced upon the ground with the bayonet by the chief of the guard. At the four corners of this original cell, guards are stationed with fixed bayonets, and a corporal is appointed chief jailer! Now I return to my brook.

It passes through some fields, sometimes bordered with bushes and reeds, sometimes with quite high trees. There it certainly is fine. I went down there a few minutes ago to wash. It is very picturesque, this view of the soldiers' torsos against the green of the meadows!

One would scarcely expect such descriptions from a warrior. But all we are doing is eating, sleeping, drilling, reading, and writing.

April 22, 1915.

My dear Friends:<sup>4</sup>

From the front where I am often thinking of you I send a message of affectionate en-

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<sup>4</sup>Letter addressed to the group of Scouts which he had founded at Montauban, supplied by the chief of the troop, Mr. Garrisson.

couragement. You have before you a magnificent task. Your fathers, your brothers, and your friends have fought and are fighting still in order to protect the soil of France, and especially in order to make the French spirit of righteousness, justice, and liberty victorious. They will make it triumph beyond our borders; it is up to you to make it the spirit of our entire *Patrie*, that each Frenchman may have only one ideal: to bring in the reign of justice.

While looking at some soldiers' tombs, I was repeating to myself these words: "They did not love their life, they had no fear of death." Their duty was to die if necessary. When they received the order, "*A l'assaut!*" they saw the enemy at the loopholes of the trenches ready to deal certain death, almost at the end of the muzzle, and they charged without hesitation. Many died; the rest are conquerors.

Your duty, yours, is to live — not as plants and animals, that merely exist, but as men who have a purpose in life and struggle to attain it. Our elders had no fear of death; you should not fear to live. For you to live means to be as well and as vigorous as possible, to

be as straightforward, as loyal, as faithful, as devoted to others, and as pure as lies within your power. That means to try very hard each day to do, not *one* good turn, but *only* good turns. In fact that means to be true scouts, men who blaze the way for others, in order to show them how one must live and where to find the strength to live aright.

If you accept this ideal, your elders will not have suffered in vain, and you will have the right in your turn to enter the race. Therefore let your watchword be "Faithful even unto death." Unto death—that is to say, during all our life we will remain faithful to Him who has shown us what a man's life can and must be; we will remain faithful to the Christ, the supreme Scout.

I wish you one and all to be able to live thus.

Your friend and brother Scout.

April 25th.

Thursday morning, arose at half-past three. At five-thirty we were off. It was beautiful weather, and one could march without fatigue, but the day promised to be hot. As a matter of fact, the heat increased little by little and the dust became thicker. But there was

a cool breeze striking us from the side, which carried away the dust, and as I was marching on the side of the column, I did not receive any.

We made few halts — five minutes every hour, and we were marching relatively fast, considering the stops necessary because of the crowded four corners. We crossed many villages and small cities which have been destroyed — Vaubécourt, Rambercourt, etc. Finally toward one o'clock, we reached Laimont, having covered about thirty kilometers. They lodged us in a barn, and there we spent the night and the following day.

Friday evening we left at eight-thirty, taking the train four kilometers away, at Revigny, in cattle cars. We were forty-four in each car and the maximum capacity is forty. To sit down each had only the space occupied by his knapsack on the floor of the car, and one slept with his head supported upon his knees — not very comfortable! The night was relatively calm.

Little by little, we approached Paris, and soon one could make out the Eiffel Tower, notwithstanding the mist. We came to a standstill in the Noisy-le-Sec station and remained

there about thirty minutes.<sup>5</sup> Then we departed by way of Creil, toward the north.

The hours passed very slowly. Happily I had some lectures of Mr. Raoul Allier to read, which I received from the Federation. We were installed for the night, but at nine o'clock *réveil* sounded suddenly. It was necessary to leap from the train, equip ourselves in all haste, and form up on the platform. Then it was a departure into the dark night. A fine cold rain fell which pierced to the skin. On the outskirts of the village of Agricourt in the Somme *Département* we heard the cannon very near; we even saw the reflection of the firing.

The first two villages to which we came were already full of soldiers. It was necessary to start off again in the rain. New wandering Jews, grumbling over the humidity and fatigue (we had just spent twenty-three hours on the train), we went from village to village, finding soldiers everywhere and no room left.

Finally we found a cantonment and there

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<sup>5</sup> Speaking of the passage through the station of Noisy-le-Sec, in a letter to a friend, he added: "Eleven kilometers from home! You can understand how it made my heart swell a bit!"

was fresh straw in abundance. But it was four o'clock in the morning and we had been on the march since 9:30 P. M., almost never halting and in the rain! Bunches of men had stopped along the way, having neither the strength nor the courage to go farther. I don't know how I stuck it out *jusqu' à bout* (to the end). Exhausted by the railway journey, famished, with shoulders raw from the fact that the straps of my knapsack were too narrow, I said to myself many times, "I flop down here." And yet I managed to hold out to the end. But as soon as I had my shoes and clothes off, I rolled up in my blanket and immediately fell asleep.

Sunday morning we did not arise until noon, and as soon as mess was swallowed we had to dry our soaked clothes, clean our guns carefully, and install ourselves in the cantonment. Finally evening arrived without my having had more than fifteen minutes of rest, during which time I hastily went through my personal devotions.

On the other hand yesterday I was very quiet. I received *Foi et Vie* and some of Mr. Allier's lectures. I enjoyed them very much



and passed them around somewhat among my comrades.

Yesterday afternoon I was called by Major Ch. Schmuckel. He proposed to take me into the 1st Battalion, and since this morning I have been assigned to the 4th Company.

My new battalion is the most distinguished of the — Army. The Major is very much loved because he is fair and always ready to render service. He is an excellent man with a high sense of duty, as he proved by leading his men to the attack of the S.K. trench at Perthes in such a masterful manner that his battalion was cited in a war order and decorated with "*la croix de guerre.*"<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The Chief of the battalion, Charles Schmuckel, Commandant *en second* of the military school of St. Maixent, had been cited à l'ordre de l'armée in these terms: "Thanks to his skill and admirable enthusiasm with which he knew how to inspire his battalion, he has succeeded in capturing strongly fortified and defended works. By his energy, his ardent spirit on the offensive and his remarkable spirit of decision, he hurled back some very bitter counter-attacks of the enemy, succeeding, not only in maintaining conquered territory, but also in gaining ground."

Fell on the field of honor, at Anzin-St. Aubin, the 15th of May.

We are held in reserve and very severely restricted in the cantonment. They fear that we may be located by enemy aeroplanes and as soon as one of them is signalled, they notify us by three bugle calls. Then every one has to hunt cover. We are still waiting until they need us for *un coup de main*.

April 26th.

I have nothing to tell you. My life is empty, made up of drill and more especially of rest. But this only apparently so. I feel that I am living ardently and intensely. Never have I lived with such keenness, even in civil life. There is within me a very volcano of emotions and ideas. Certainly I shall never be the same as before.

I would like you to read some of Raoul Allier's lectures — the list is found in *Le Christianisme* — and an article by Pierre Chavannes in *Foi et Vie* (April 15, 1915) entitled "*Emmaüs, méditation laïque.*" The entire article is worth studying closely, for it is magnificent. You will find in it some ideas which are troubling me at this very minute.

I am much concerned as to the legitimacy of this war. I have confidence that our cause

is just and good, and that we have the right on our side. But it is necessary that this war should be fruitful and that from all these deaths a new life should spring forth for humanity.

I am thinking incessantly of the France of tomorrow, of this young France awaiting its hour. It is absolutely essential that it should be a consecrated France, where each person shall have but one reason for being — *le Devoir*. Every one will live only in so much as he understands his duty and struggles to accomplish it. And it is up to us Protestants, or rather to us "believers," to reveal this new life to the world. It is our duty to be apostles; and that duty is clear, for Jesus defined it: "Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." Perfect *in ourselves*: which means to develop our personality *jusqu' à bout*, to make it give all that it *can* give, to push it even to the perfect stature of Christ. And then perfect *in others* (for we believe with all our might in the communion of the saints, do we not?): which signifies to pray for others, in order that they may know how to submit their conscience and their will to *the royal will of God*.

April 27th.

You can not realize the intensity of my life at the present time, during these hours of rest, blessed hours, in which self-imposed tasks shaped by traditional formulas and moulds have been replaced by a free development of the soul.

I have often dreamed of this hour, *when I should enter into the reality of life*. But I did not believe that it would come so soon. And now I am enjoying it profoundly.

The only thing which I regret is not to have time enough to coordinate my thoughts. That will take place naturally, little by little, and the links between my ideas then will be vital, and organic, no longer artificial. But what a lack of tranquillity for praying aright.

Pray for me and ask God that I may have the patience necessary to await at this time the hour of going under fire, and to await well.

April 28th.

This afternoon the fête of our Company takes place. There will be songs, choruses, recitations, etc. A pretty little stage has been decorated with pine boughs and it seems there

are some *artistes* who are quite good. But we were not permitted to go unless we left all together in column by four. Those who were not ready had to remain at the cantonment, as has been the case with me.

I had finished putting on my knapsack, and was binding the shaky edifice with the last strap, when the whole thing collapsed in my hands. The strap buckles had given way all at once. So I had to mend them all and it required too much time to be ready at the appointed hour.

Here I have found my comrade D., which pleases me very much. He is a very fine lad, originally from Papéete, and a student in the Bordeaux High School of Commerce. He knows the missionaries Moreau and Vernier very well.

April 28th.

It is wonderfully fine, at a moment like this, to feel that there are others around us and behind us, who have the same ideal as ourselves and are following the same "*Marche à l'Etoile.*" Others besides us, if we can not do it, will labor at the great task of conquering the world for its King, our King. Others

will be able to raise high the torch which we had dreamed of carrying forward.

Others — but I have too much faith in life and its value to pause at this hypothesis. I do not wish to prepare myself for death, but for life — for life eternal, without doubt, but more immediately for the life on earth. Certainly when I return, like every one else, I shall have to be different; I shall no longer have the right to be what I was before. Otherwise how would the war have served me? Have we not this conviction, that it is necessary to renew humanity? And is it not our duty to be renewed, ourselves, first of all?

And to begin with, it seems to me that we must develop and infinitely enlarge the conception of our ministry. Pastors, yes, no doubt (I take the term in the sense in which it is currently used today, that is to say, as guides, preachers, and counsellors of a parish) — we must be that, and missionaries also. But we must be more than that, we must be *men*; still more, apostles. We must shine beyond our circle and group around us *all* men of good will. In addition, we must struggle that every will with which we come in contact may become a good will.

First, there will be our preaching to change. All that consists in empty formulas, beautiful as they may be, powerfully as they may have contributed to nourish souls; all the formulas which are today empty because our philosophic or religious thought, our experiences or our conception of life have outgrown them or caused them to burst their frames — all such formulas must disappear. And what we shall substitute for them as our statement of faith will be not less great, not less beautiful, not less true, if we search for it in the depths of souls in union with God. And it will not be less Christian, for the Spirit of Christ is a spirit which lives, which develops — never remaining for a moment in any fixed form.

Our spiritual ministry must include a special *concern for the young*. Without doubt, we always must speak, and indefatigably, of consolation and hope. But our church must not become an asylum of the hopeless and the crushed. Above all, it is necessary to speak of *life*, which is summed up in this one word: *le Devoir*. A total consecration to its complete duty must be the life of the new humanity.

They have just announced to us that we

are to leave this evening; whither, I have no idea. Therefore I shall doubtless be obliged to shorten my letter. Probably we are going nearer to the firing line.

You will find attached a clipping from a sermon of Georges Lauga, concerning the influence of men after death — just a little memorandum for you to use as you like. In my letter to L. I forgot an idea to which I attach considerable importance: the development of one's own personality. I refer you to three lectures by Raoul Allier, entitled "*Semeurs de vie*," "*Dans le mystère de l'ame*," and "*La mystérieuse conquête*."

Finally there remains prayer. We have already spoken of it, but the subject is inexhaustible. I do not refer to prayer of intercession for others, that they may know how to shape their lives to the Father's will of infinite love and that their vision of the duty to accomplish may be ever clearer and more vivid.

There is also prayer for ourselves. We must pray to be pardoned. Pardon is at first the destruction of habits and associations of ideas which grow in us so as to paralyze us. Briefly, we must ask God to renew our liberty



without ceasing. Speaking on this subject, do you recall the conclusion of the course of lectures by Mr. Bois on liberty and in particular that we are free at each moment of the volitional act?

There is more than that in pardon: to believe that God is love is to imply that He can suffer and that He actually suffers from each of our shortcomings, as He rejoices in our joys and our successes (cf. many of the sayings of Jesus; P. Gounelle: "*Le livre qui vit*," dans *Foi et Vie*, 1914; Fallot: "*Le Dieu masqué*," etc.). We must humble ourselves for making HIM suffer and have communion in His suffering.

We ask God for strength. Remember the word addressed to Gideon: "Go with the force that thou hast"; it surely holds true for us also. We are strong, but we ignore the fact often voluntarily; we are afraid of this strength which is in us, for, if we used it as it should be used, it would direct us perhaps where we do not wish to go. Let us ask God that we may recognize this strength and that we may know how to use it that it may bring the greatest returns for Him.

Neither do we know about the subconscious self in prayer, where it plays, I believe, a great

rôle (cf. Rom. 8:26-31, and, for the meaning, I Cor. 14:1-26). I do not yet seize the real significance of this fact very well; I merely indicate it to you.

Pardon me for not writing more. I must stop in order to buckle on my knapsack in view of an immediate departure. But I was anxious to send you these few thoughts which draw us together.

April 30th.

We left Epagny at 8:15 to take the train. We were better off than formerly, only forty men per box car and with straw on the floor. We made a long run in the direction of the coast, then came back toward the interior.

Leaving the train at 9 o'clock, we were piled into motor-trucks. We were thirty per car and packed like sardines. Absolutely tropical heat and horribly dusty. The sweat moistened our faces so that the dust stuck; then later when we marched the perspiration traced magnificent marble effects on the face. Really we were sights!

After 25 kilometers by auto we set off on foot (it was noon) and covered a march of only a few hours, though fatiguing because of the heat and dust.

Finally we are quartered near Arras. We sleep here tonight in the open air. We are quite at the front. Before us there are only the trenches, three kilometers away, and behind us the soldiers *au repos* and the artillery which is firing over our heads. Our aeroplanes are flying in every direction and the Germans are cannonading in vain. We will go to the trenches doubtless tomorrow.

May 1st.

Just think, this morning we were baptized with fire. Oh! the baptism was not very damp this time nor very serious, but it is the beginning.

On all sides we are surrounded with artillery. Already yesterday afternoon the field pieces were letting loose, but at nightfall they introduced the great *valse*. Shells were fired from every side, and I assure you we heard the shots plainly. And it lasted like that until morning. Then they grew less frequent; one here, another there, from time to time. But at 9:45 the heavy pieces on our right, close at hand, opened a fire by volleys to which the Germans lost no time in replying.

As a matter of fact at the moment when they had just served us *la soupe* I heard in the air toward the left, a noise like that of a locomotive puffing rapidly up a steep grade; the sounds were very short and close together. Instinctively I raised my head to see the thing pass and naturally, nothing doing! Two seconds later, a terrific explosion. A 105 marmite, it seems, had burst 300 meters from us! We watched the smoke; they must have been firing at the artillery.

A few minutes passed, then another locomotive, much nearer. This time — a tableau! One would have thought himself in the midst of an Arab camp at the hour of prayer, and the little tents added to the illusion. *Subito*, almost all of the men fell face downward, lying flat on the ground for the most part, or crouched as low as possible, or kneeling on the ground with the bodies bent over double. For an instant no one moved. I heard a slow, soft whistling, p-s-s-st, then a dull thud, paf! It was a shell fragment striking the tree against which I was leaning, about five meters above the ground.

Then everybody arose, and the few who had remained standing showed us where the frag-

ments had struck and where the shell had fallen. This time it was closer; less than 200 meters away, it seems. The firing appears to have been a curtain fire, the shells falling with the regularity of a scythe stroke, sweeping over a wide space. So when one hears a new marmite coming along, everybody drops.

But the blows are finding our left again. Evidently it is the artillery they are after, and they do not know that two companies are bivouacked so near. And so, when two other marmites passed over every one remained standing and went on calmly eating.

Rather long silence, then, suddenly our 155's reply. And since then, the firing has never stopped. There is at least one shot every two minutes, sometimes volleys of three, four, and five in succession.

Otherwise all goes well. I had an excellent siesta from one to two. Now I have just drawn twelve packages of cartridges which make me 200 "prunes" in all. This evening we shall no doubt hustle forward to relieve the others in the trenches.

May 2nd.

Here I am in the famous trenches! Yes-

terday evening at 8:45 they assembled us in front of the cantonment, and, knapsack in position, each one carrying a dish or a kettle in his hand, we left in the greatest silence. The artillery, at that moment, was not working and there was no light except that of the rockets hurled abruptly from time to time by the Germans or ourselves, and the pocket flashlights of the officers. It was truly impressive, this night march of the entire battalion.

After having crossed a destroyed village we entered into the *boyau* (communication trench). Dug out in the thick clay, it sufficed to hide us completely. As we approached the real trench, the noise of the fusillade became more distinct and some balls commenced to whistle above our heads. Instinctively, one ducks!

After more than an hour and a half of marching in the *boyau*, we reached the trench and relieved the regiment which was occupying it. We have some very comfortable rest rooms dug in the wall of the trench. There are such inscriptions as: "Attention, dangerous bend"; "Look out for women and children"; "Carriage road leading to the Ger-

mans, climb the opposite bank and march straight ahead!" etc.

Naturally the first moments passed in the trenches are quite exciting. On all sides bullets whistle; shells and bombs pass over head. But one quickly gets accustomed to it and by the end of an hour no longer trembles.

An amusing thing is the very diversity of the sounds heard in the trenches: the German dry, sharp, vibrating detonations; ours, a deeper bass; those of the different cannon, gatling guns, and trench mortars; the variety of the noises which the shells make in passing and exploding; the metallic sound of bullets striking some hard objects; the rockets; the aeroplane motors; and, finally, the song of the larks, for in the well-started fields of grain separating the trenches, they sing as if nothing were going on.

You can not realize how near you seem, you and mother, and how delightful that is to me.

*Roclincourt, May 3rd.*

About 9 P. M. yesterday, the —th Company came to relieve us, and now we are quartered in the village of Roclincourt, or at least, in what remains of this village. We are lodging

in a house that has more windows than the architects intended, thanks to the shells; and we are sleeping on straw, *pêle-mêle* with the rats that swarm here.

This morning I was sleeping peacefully when they came to call me, as well as another soldier, named D. The lieutenant has nominated us artillerymen. D. is range finder and I am server for a cannon of 37 mm. which shoots very pretty little percussion shells. The *animal* is situated quite on the first line, in a covered shelter. When it is not in use, the loophole can be blocked up with sand bags. It is a good plan, for the Germans locate and fire well: for instance, this morning while we were making some trial shots, several bullets struck right beside the loophole.

It is a responsible post.

May 4th.

There are many experiences which I rejoice in having at this hour.

In the first place, the experience of mingling with men. During these hours when, at each instant, one is risking his life, they show themselves exactly as they are, boasting neither good nor evil. All that is superficial, all



masks, disappear, and the *man* alone stands out. Thus one makes the acquaintance of souls, under conditions which doubtless will never be found again.

Next comes the experience of the "communion of saints." At no moment have I felt so near to my dear ones and to all those I love. Never could I have believed that, notwithstanding the distances, we could be joined so closely with those who are with us in the struggle. This is true also of certain friends, of the Student Volunteers in particular, and of those who while not being "Volunteers" have replied also, "Here am I, Lord, send me." And this brings me to the best of these three experiences, to the unique and marvelous experience of prayer.

Do you not believe that if our Monday morning prayer meetings were sometimes so cold, it was because we made prayers instead of praying? Read again Romans 8:26, 27.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

These meditations lead me, moreover, to Henri Bois whose sane and *human* philosophy I enjoy more and more.

May 5th.

It seems that we are going up to the trenches this evening. I am not sorry at the thought for there at least there is something doing. The artillery duel is going on over our heads, but one pays no more attention to it.

May 5th.

Our village is nearly in the center of the zone of fire of the two artilleries. Since yesterday afternoon the bombardment has been quite violent; but it is really nothing as yet, and when the preparation for the attack commences we shall see something very different.

Moreover, one gets quickly accustomed to all these noises and even pays no more attention to them, while the first days we ducked our heads at each burst or whistling which seemed a little near!

You hope that this trial will do me much good. Thanks. I already feel changed. The abstract being within me is gradually disappearing. Many realities of the spiritual world which before were only phantoms have

become flesh and life by an experience renewed at every instant. I am learning *to live*.

But a solemn hour is approaching. Tomorrow or the day after we are going to attack. We must go up with fixed bayonets, and the assault will be terrible because it is no longer *one* trench which must be captured, it is a question of several kilometers. If I remain up there, know that I die without fear and in peace. I ask only one thing — that the little strength which I have been able to consecrate may in some measure react on those who have loved me and whom I have loved, upon all my companions in labor and ideals.

May 6th.

I am in good health and I embrace you.<sup>8</sup>

May 8th.

Since Thursday evening I have been back in the trenches, knowing that the big attack is near at hand. And since that time my life has been one tense and anxious watching for

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<sup>8</sup> These lines were written upon a postcard. They were the last which he mailed through the Quartermaster.

the coming hour. But I am at peace, I fear nothing, I shall be able to do my duty with the aid of God.

The bombardment is becoming more and more violent. Today, particularly, the artillery is firing without a stop and one can hear only the noise of the shells. They whistle through the air, on a level with the trench, like a great heart-rending sob. Then they explode over yonder with a dry crash, and everything flies — earth, wood, and iron. Finally come the shell splinters, reaching up to where we are and falling on all sides. And to think that it is scarcely the fiftieth part of the artillery surrounding us which is firing! What will it be like when all belch forth at once? Therefore I am hopeful. The attack can not fail to succeed. There will be some wounded, some killed, but we shall go forward and far —<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The letter was unfinished and was found in the pocket of his *capote* when he was buried.

IV

ON THE FIELD OF HONOR



## IV

### ON THE FIELD OF HONOR

THE 9th of May, in Artois, the general offensive was begun which ended in the glorious capture of Neuville St. Vaast, of the Labyrinth, of Carency, and of other places, whose names will remain engraved on the hearts of many a French father and mother.

Exactly at ten o'clock, certain companies of the —th battalion left the trenches of Roclin-court. Some seconds later, running by the side of his lieutenant in a bayonet charge, the young soldier fell, never to rise again. How fully he was prepared, under the watchful eye of God, to face this supreme hour without fear, is plain enough from his letters.

Others have informed us as to how he performed his duty and gave his life. Let them tell the story.

*Letter from Major Ch. Schmuckel*

May 12th, 1915.

I had charged your dear son to tell you that I welcomed him into the battalion with joy;

and several times we have had the opportunity of praying together. I was not slow to appreciate all that this modest youth held in reserve: his kindness, his calm, his quiet courage, his intellectual and moral value.

When we attacked, May 9th, two or three times, alas without result, with a number of other obscure heroes he fell or at least disappeared. Is he a prisoner, has he been killed, or else wounded and picked up by some ambulance? Alas! I can give you no certain information. I immediately had a search made for him, but have had no news of him, and any supposition is permissible.

I did not write you sooner because I wished to know something definite. All that I can write you now is that we have not been able to bury him, and that a shadow of hope remains. Our beloved battalion, already mentioned *à l'ordre de l'armée* has heroically and dearly paid its debt. As a friend, as a relative, as a leader, I mourn for all my dear soldier boys but especially for yours, who had prayed with me on the eve of the battle.

Yours, sorrowfully moved,

CH. SCHMUCKEL.



P.S. A comrade, charged with the search for the missing, again comes back and still without news. In any event you may have this consolation — the comrades of your dear son went into the attack with an enthusiasm which won for us the thanks of the Colonel commanding the brigade, and they charged heroically against all odds, against an enemy formidably entrenched, which it was necessary to hold back at any price in order to win the success you have heard of. Three times we went forward for the sake of Honor and our *Patrie!*

*Three days after he wrote to us the Major, himself, was killed by a shell in the trenches. We were informed of it by a letter from a comrade of our son. His message showed us that there was no longer ground for cherishing the faint hope which the uncertainty of earlier news had authorized us; and that our child would return to the family hearth no more.*

*Here is the soldier's letter. It merits a place beside that of the glorious officer. Together they suggest this thought — such leaders are*

*worthy to command such men. France links them together in a common and devout gratitude.*

*Letter from Mr. H. R.*

*Roclincourt, May 17th.*

Major Schmuckel was killed two days ago and I do not know if his death coming so quickly did not prevent him from informing you of some sad news, news for which you have needed or will need all your courage and all your confidence in the beyond, so painful and cruel will it be to you. I am sure that, God helping, you will bear it, seeing there only a trial — alas, how sad! — coming from Him who is the Master of all.

Alfred Casalis, your son and my friend, is dead. On the morning of May 9th, he dashed courageously forward in the attack on the German trenches, and the bullets which do not choose between the good and the bad brutally mowed him down.

Since entering the instruction camp of Castelsarrasin, we had never left each other's company, and I believed that we were going to fight together. Because of his change to the —th Battalion I was not with him when he

died. When I learned of his glorious death I was starting for the trenches, and so it was impossible for me to make inquiries about him. On coming back *au repos* I endeavored to find out what had become of Alfred's body. It was only yesterday I learned that it had been placed in a common grave dug on the battlefield near the place where he fell.

Today I went to recite a prayer over the grave of this dear fallen friend. He is buried near the village of Roclincourt within the township of that name. His memory will remain engraved in my heart as that of a comrade and sincere affectionate friend. I am a Catholic, he was a Protestant, and this difference of religious opinion in no way interfered with the bonds of friendship which were drawing us closer together every day.

Lonely as I was when he left the squad to which we both had been assigned, the loneliness which I experience now that he is no longer is infinitely greater. Would that my grief might lessen yours, that of his beloved mother, and of all his other relatives.

While waiting the hour of victory which he will see from the heights of a better world, an hour which unhappily will not strike before

having plunged many families into mourning, accept, dear Sir, once more the assurance of my very sincere participation in your terrible sorrow.

You who more than I speak with God, because of your vocation and ministry, pray for France and her children.

H. R.

*On the same day the pastor, Benoît-Bergis, Chaplain of the Army Corps, sent us this message:*

“The eve of the day when he had to advance to the attack, instructed of the dangers he was going to run, your son had prayed with his Major and some others of his battalion. He asked God to guard them amidst the shot and shell and in the heat of action.

“His prayer was heard otherwise than we could have desired; but may the faith which sustained him up to the end help you to endure without a murmur the will of our Heavenly Friend. And may so many sacrifices willingly offered and so many tears poured out for her render us still more devoted to our dear *Patrie*.”

*One last comforting certainty was granted us: our child had not remained, as we at first had feared, for long hours and perhaps days in agony on the battlefield. The machine guns had mowed him down in full charge, and death was instantaneous.*

*When, at the price of great efforts, the bodies could be brought back and devoutly buried, they found in the pocket of his great-coat his will, written in a firm hand four days before the attack. It concludes as follows:*

“ Know that at the moment of departure, looking steadfastly within, I believe that I can say without arrogance and also without false shame, that ‘ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith ’ and I would that all my friends, all those who are every moment with me and whose hearts beat with mine, could repeat the word of our hope: ‘ Because I live, ye shall live also. ’ ”

A. E. CASALIS.

*Roelincourt, May 5, 1915.*

*Thus ended his short life upon this earth. But the impulse which carried him forward to the attack was not broken by the bullet which*

*laid his body low. He continued his course, the soldier boy, and went onward into the Paradise of God where he achieved his " Marche à l'Etoile."*

*Paris, January 15, 1916.*

THE END



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